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Be A Better Writer

Tips To Improve Your Writing – No Matter What You Write!

Suzanne Lieurance



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Be A Better Writer: Tips To Improve Your Writing – No Matter What You Write!

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1 About The Author

Suzanne Lieurance is a former classroom teacher now a full time freelance writer, speaker, and writing coach. She is the author of more than two dozen published books and has written articles for a variety of magazines, newsletters, ezines, and websites including Family Fun, New Moon for Girls, Children's Writer, Kansas City Weddings, Instructor magazine, The Journal of Reading, and many others.

Lieurance taught children's writing for the Institute of Children's Literature from 2000 to 2008, and she now teaches a variety of online writing workshops for both children and adults. Visit her author website at www.suzannelieurance.com.

2 Introduction

You may not be a professional writer. Yet no matter what type of profession you are in, chances are you will need to write something on a professional level at one time or another. This handy e-book includes tips that will help you improve your writing (and actually get your writing done faster and easier) no matter what type of writing you need to do.

How to Use This E-book

Start with the first section of this e-book. It gives a good overview of the types of things you can do to improve your overall writing skills.

Next, move on to any of the sections that give tips for the specific type of writing you wish to do or need to do at the moment. For example, if you need to put together a resume, read the section with tips for resume writing. If you need to write a letter of complaint, skip to that section for tips to get your letter started.

Each section of this e-book also includes a checklist. It's a good idea to read the checklist for the type of writing you need to do even BEFORE you start to write, then read and follow the tips. Use the checklist again, after you've written your material, to make sure what you've written is the best you can make it.

Each section of this e-book ends with a few resources you might find helpful if you need additional tips or other information for the specific type of writing you wish to do.

Use this e-book as a reference any time to improve your writing – no matter what you write!

3 Overall Writing Tips

You can improve your overall writing with the following twelve tips. These tips apply to fiction as well as nonfiction.

Tip #1 Know Your Audience

For any type of writing, from novels to business reports, the first thing you need to do is identify your audience; the people who will read your work. The audience for a sales letter from your company or client is much different from the audience for a company memo or a children's story. The audience you're writing for will determine the tone, style, and even the subject matter of your material.

Before you start to write, make a few notes about your intended audience. This will help you make sure that what you write will appeal to this audience and will fit their needs and wants. If you're writing for children, for example, knowing the age range for the children you're writing for will help you make sure your story or nonfiction piece is age-appropriate for your readers.

Tip #2 Know Your Purpose for Writing

Besides knowing the audience you are writing for, you should also identify your purpose for writing for this audience. If you identify your purpose upfront, you'll be able to keep your writing tightly focused on that purpose. You'll also be able to guide your readers to taking any action you might want them to take. If you're writing a sales letter, for example, your purpose is to persuade readers to buy a specific product or service. If you're writing a letter of complaint, you'll want to do more than merely complain about poor service or a faulty product you have purchased. Your purpose will be to prompt the company you purchased from to remedy their mistake.

Make a few notes as to the purpose of whatever it is you're going to write. You'll be more likely to fulfill this purpose if you take time to become very aware of it before you start writing.

Tip #3 Plan Before You Write

Planning is actually a separate step in the writing process. Yet many people try to do the planning and the writing all in one step. Then they tend to get frustrated because the writing takes too long or is too difficult to do. If you plan what you will write before you sit down to actually write it, the writing will be much faster and easier. Plus, your overall writing will be much better. Planning what you need to write can be an enjoyable step in the writing process.

Tip #4 Decide on Structure

As you're planning your writing project, decide on the best structure for it. That is, create a way to best organize the information you will be writing about. If you create a structure for your project as you're planning your writing, this structure will provide you with a blueprint for your project. With the blueprint in place, all you'll need to do to complete the project when you sit down to write is follow the blueprint.

Most novels are written in chapters. Each of the chapters consists of scenes. If you want to write a novel, then outline your novel by describing what should take place in each chapter. Next, break down the action in each chapter into scenes. When it's time to start writing, all you'll need to do to complete your novel is write one scene at a time. Those scenes will turn into chapters, and those chapters will eventually become your book.

A good nonfiction article usually starts with a catchy title, followed by a "hook" sentence (called the lead), which is part of an introductory paragraph that pulls in the reader. This paragraph is followed by the body of the article, which covers the main points of the piece, and the article ends with a concluding paragraph.

If you're unsure as to how you should structure the material you need to write, study something similar. Make note of how it was structured. The same structure might work well for your material. Many writers find that once they have decided how they will structure or organize their article, story, report, etc., the material seems to write itself.

Tip #5 Write Simply

For the most part, the best writing is easy to read and easy to understand. Try to write simply. Avoid obscure vocabulary in most of your writing. Only use technical jargon when you have first identified your audience, so you know they will understand it without extensive explanations. Vary your sentence length. Use many short sentences with a few longer sentences mixed in each paragraph. Be sure your sentences "pull" the reader through the text in a logical order.

Tip #6 Use Online Resources to Get Started

The Internet is full of great resources. If you can't seem to get started on a particular writing project, go online to locate a few samples to use as templates or patterns for your own writing. For example, if you need to write a resume, go to www.google.com and type in "resume templates" in the search engine window. Sites with a variety of resume templates will pop up. If you need to write a business letter but you aren't quite sure how to organize it, then google "how to write a business letter" and you'll find many articles that will include samples of business letters. Samples and templates are used by professional writers all the time, although they may change the templates somewhat to suit their needs. Eventually, you'll be able to do that, too.

Tip #7 Use Active Voice

Active voice tends to make the writing more engaging and immediate for the reader. To give your material an active voice, stick to basic simple sentence structure for the most part. Start your sentences with a noun or pronoun, followed by a verb and then the object of that verb.

Like this:

Active: Mary hit the ball.

Passive: The ball was hit by Mary.

Also use simple verb forms. Instead of writing, “he **would sweep** the porch every morning,” write, “he **swept** the porch every morning.”

Avoid beginning too many sentences with a participle phrase (generally a verb that ends in -ing). Here’s an example of a sentence starting with a participle phrase:

Crossing the street and *walking* toward the park, Mary hurried to her job.

It isn’t incorrect to begin a sentence with a participle phrase. It just slows down the reader (making your material less active) if too many sentences on a page begin this way.

A good exercise to try – particularly if you’re writing fiction – is to go back over a few pages or a chapter of your work, specifically looking for sentences that begin with a participle phrase. Circle each of these phrases, then notice how many are on each page. If you find you have overused participle phrases as the way to begin sentences, change some of the sentences to make them more active. Like this:

Mary crossed the street. She walked toward the park as she hurried to her job.

Tip #8 Use Precise Verbs

Precise verbs help readers create clearer mental images of the information you are trying to convey. For example, “he stomped over to the coffeepot” is much clearer and less clunky than saying, “he angrily walked over to the coffeepot.”

Here are some simple verbs, along with more precise counterparts:

Verb	**Precise Verb**
Ran	Raced, streaked, charged
Talked	Chatted, discussed, debated
Sat	Plopped, Flopped, plunked

Tip #9 Use Precise Nouns

It may take a bit longer to come up with a noun that tells your reader precisely what you are describing. But just like precise verbs, precise nouns make your writing stronger and they enable the reader to get a clearer, more accurate mental image of what you're trying to convey. For example, a brown ball could mean any number of things, but a meatball gives a very specific image to the reader.

Tip #10 Watch for Words You Tend to Overuse

Most writers have a few key phrases or words they tend to overuse. When you've finished writing a chapter of a novel, or a nonfiction article, etc., go back over your work, looking for the specific words you tend to overuse. Consult a thesaurus and change some of these words to other words that have the same meaning.

Tip #11 Write Tight

Writing tight means making every word count. To write tight, eliminate any unnecessary words. Why say, "he nodded his head", for example, when all you need to say is, "he nodded", (because what else would he nod but his head?).

Wordy	**Tight**
shrugged his shoulders	shrugged
said softly	whispered

Tip #12 Proof Your Work

Before you send your work out to your intended readers, proof it one last time. Check for spelling mistakes, punctuation and grammatical errors, and general typos.

4 Tips For Writing Web Content

Almost everyone is writing for the web these days in one way or another. For some people, a blog is a way to share their personal experiences with the world. For others, a website highlights their business and attracts new customers and clients. What many people fail to realize though, is that writing for the web is a bit different from writing for regular hard copy publications. Here's why:

People generally read newspapers and magazines at a leisurely pace. They linger over the morning paper with a cup of coffee or sit down in their favorite easy chair to read their favorite magazine. When they want to find information quickly and easily, they turn to the Internet.

Here are some tips for writing effective web content that will be easier for online readers to find and easier for them to read. If you follow these tips, it will also be faster and easier to write web content, even if all you need to write for the Web is a personal blog post.

Tip #1 Start with Keywords and Keyword Phrases

If you have a topic you wish to write about, do some initial keyword research to come up with the exact keywords people use to locate information about this topic. Use these keywords in your article title (or page title if you're writing a webpage; post title if you're writing a blog post), in the subtopic headings within the article, and in the body of your article.

Keywords and keyword phrases will help your web content get indexed by the online search engines so it will be easy for readers to find, which means more people will read your material. Using keywords will also help you focus your material.

There are many online search tools to help you identify the keywords people are using to locate information about your topic. Some of these keyword search tools are free, others require payment to use them. Try a free search tool first. Just go to google.com and type in "google keyword tool", then click on the first result that comes up. For more information about how to use online keyword search tools, go to the resource page at the end of this chapter.

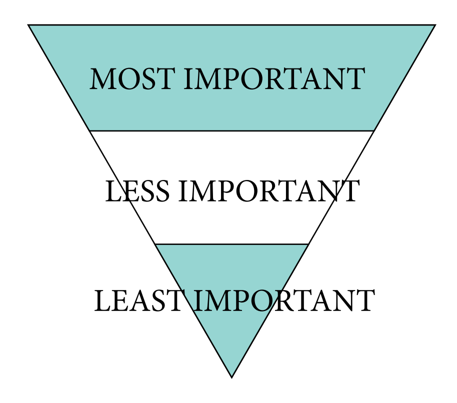
Tip #2 Write in Short, Bite-Size Chunks

When people turn to the Internet for information, they don't read things word for word. They tend to scan articles, pages, etc. looking for the most important points. For that reason, make your content scannable. That just means you should write in simple, bite-sized paragraphs. Keep sentences relatively short, between 15–20 words. Keep paragraphs short, too, between 40–70 words. Even titles and headings should be short – around 8 words or less.

Article and pages should be short, as well. Generally, readers do not like to read material that is too long and requires them to scroll down the page a few times. Get your point across in 500–1,000 words whenever possible.

Tip #3 Use Inverted Pyramid Style

Material that is easy to read is well organized. Use the style favored by journalists – inverted pyramid style – to organize your material. This way, readers can easily scan the material for the most important points (which will be in the first two or three paragraphs).



Tip #4 Use Numbered Steps or Bulleted Points

If you're writing a how-to page or article, write the directions in numbered steps or bulleted points. This will make them easier for the reader to follow and also easier for the reader to scan. In fact, use bulleted points or numbered steps wherever you can when writing online content.

Tip #5 Include Visual Elements

Include illustrations, photos, charts, etc. for visual appeal and to further explain your concepts and ideas. These items will also make your web copy more shareable through social networks like Pinterest and Facebook. To find out how to optimize your visual materials for search engines, turn to the resource section of this chapter.

Tip #6 Use Hyperlinks

A hyperlink is a word, phrase, or graphic that links to another webpage. If you want to lead readers to more detailed information about something within an online article or page, include hyperlinks to this information instead of trying to include too many details within the article itself. Readers (and search engines) like to see hyperlinks in material they read online when these links lead them to more information about the topic. Think of hyperlinks as a way to give added value to your readers.

Tip #7 Focus on Your Reader

If you're writing content for your website, or for a client's website if you're a professional writer, the natural tendency is to focus on all your company, or your client's company, has to offer. But you need to focus on the reader – the prospective client or customer – instead.

Visit the websites of several businesses like yours (or your client's). Notice how many of these sites appeal to customers and clients by writing directly to them – using words like "you" and "our customers" or "our clients." The content at these sites will also focus on benefits their customers and clients receive from them rather than highlighting the features of the company's products or services.

Tip #8 Include a Call to Action

A call to action means you tell the reader what to do after he has read your article or webpage. If you're writing a sales page, the call to action would be to place an order now. If you're writing a blog post, you may want to direct readers to another page or article for additional information on the topic, or you might want to invite them to join your online mailing list. The point is, you can't simply expect readers to take the action you want them to take without specifically instructing them to do so. Include some sort of call to action when appropriate for the web content you are writing.

Tip #9 Proof Your Work Before Publishing

Before you publish your content online, be sure all hyperlinks are working. Check for spelling mistakes, general typos, etc. Make sure the material formats correctly on screen; the spacing is correct, the photos and other illustrations line up correctly on the page, etc.

Checklist For Web Content

Check off each item on this list to insure your online content is ready to publish.

____ 1. The title of the material includes keywords or keyword phrases.

____ 2. The keywords are used within the article itself (but not overused).

____ 3. The content is easily scannable. Material is written in short chunks or paragraphs.

____ 4. The content is written in inverted pyramid style, with the most important points in the first two or three paragraphs.

____ 5. Bulleted points or numbered steps are included if appropriate.

____ 6. The material includes illustrations, photos, charts, sidebars, etc. for visual appeal.

____ 7. Helpful hyperlinks are included in the content.

____ 8. The material focuses on the reader.

____ 9. The content includes a call-to-action.

____ 10. The content has been proofed and final corrections have been made.

Resources For Writing Web Content

Helpful Articles Online

Writing for the Web
http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/

How to Do Keyword Research – The Beginners Guide to SEO
http://www.seomoz.org/beginners-guide-to-seo/keyword-research

How to Make a Hyperlink
http://www.hyperlinkcode.com/make-hyperlink.php

10 Places to Find Free Images Online and Make Your Content More Linkable
http://www.hyperlinkcode.com/make-hyperlink.php

Books

Title: ***Letting Go of the Words, Second Edition: Writing Web Content that Works***
Author: Janice (Ginny) Redish
Paperback: 368 pages
Publisher: Morgan Kaufmann; 2 edition (August 28, 2012)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0123859301
ISBN-13: 978-0123859303

Title: ***Web Copy That Sells: The Revolutionary Formula for Creating Killer Copy That Grabs Their Attention and Compels Them to Buy***
Author: Maria Veloso
Paperback: 336 pages
Publisher: AMACOM; Second Edition edition (April 29, 2009)
ISBN-10: 0814413048
ISBN-13: 978-0814413043

Associations/Groups for Web Content Writers

The HTML Writers Guild
http://www.hwg.org/

International Webmasters Association
http://www.iwanet.org/

5 Tips For Writing Magazine Articles

If you enjoy writing and would like to make some income from what you write, you probably have considered writing for magazines. Some of the bigger, more popular magazines offer $1.00 per word and more, so writing for these publications is a great way to increase your income. The trick is to start small and write for local publications for either no pay or low pay. Your goal at this point is to gain publication credits. Next, move up to regional publications, which tend to pay a bit better and have a larger readership. Once you have a dozen or so impressive publication credits (called clips), you'll be ready to query the large, glossy magazines.

Here are some tips for breaking into the magazine markets. These tips apply to the small, no-pay, low pay publications as well as the well-paying glossies (major magazines).

Tip #1 Study the Markets

Surprisingly, many people who think they want to write for magazines never take the time to actually read the magazines they wish to write for. Yet this is the first step to writing for magazines. In fact, if you want to write for a particular magazine you should read about 6 month's to a year's worth of back issues. That way, you'll begin to get a feel for the types of things the magazine publishes, you'll know what they've published lately (so you won't make the mistake of querying about a topic they've recently covered), and you'll also become familiar with the style and tone of the magazine. Editors want writers who are very familiar with their magazines, so the more you know about a magazine the better your chances of writing for it.

Choose three or four small, local magazines you'd like to write for. Study back issues of each of these publications and keep submitting to them until you finally break in with each of them. Once you do, you'll gain some publication credits, plus you'll also acquire experience working with editors. These credits and experience will help prepare you to move up to better paying publications. Eventually, you'll be ready to write for your favorite magazines, and you'll be more likely to have your queries to them accepted.

Tip #2 Study Submission Guidelines

Each magazine has very specific submission guidelines. These guidelines can be found in a current market guide (available at most bookstores and online) or at the magazine's website. Some magazines also publish an editorial calendar and/or a themes list, so you should check for these items and study them as well.

Once you've studied a magazine's submission guidelines, follow them to the letter when preparing a query and later when you get the go-ahead to write an article.

Tip #3 Start with a Winning Query

Most magazines will want a query letter before they give you the go-ahead to write and submit an article. Your query should show the editor that you have read past issues of the magazine, you are familiar with their submission guidelines, and you have a great idea for an article for his/her particular publication.

Tip #4 Develop a Unique Topic or Slant

When you're creating your query, try to come up with a unique topic or a unique "slant" to a common topic that will make your article appeal to the editor and his/her readers in a fresh, new way. Use this slant to develop a catchy tentative title for your article.

Tip #5 Use Primary Sources

Look for interesting sources of information for your article. Try to find sources that the editor of the magazine you wish to write for will be pleased with. Usually, this means you will want to find as many primary sources as you can. Primary sources include people who have witnessed the event you will be writing about or otherwise have some firsthand knowledge about your topic. Old diaries and journals, and newspaper accounts are also considered primary sources. Avoid too many secondary sources that everyone has easy access to; items like encyclopedias, textbooks, and other books.

Tip #6 Create Structure

A well-structured article is easy for people to read, but it is also easier to write. With that in mind, if you come up with a structure for your article first, then basically you'll just be filling in different sections when you write your article.

Many times your title will help determine the structure for an article. For example, if your article title is *The Top Ten Reasons Most People Just Can't Write Well*, the structure for this article would probably include a short introductory paragraph, followed by each of your ten reasons – in numbered paragraphs – and end with a short concluding paragraph. If your title were something like *Easy, Breezy Strawberry Ice Cream,* your article would probably open with a short introductory paragraph, followed by a list of ingredients, and then the steps or instructions for using these ingredients to make the strawberry ice cream.

Tip #7 Hook the Reader

Start your article with an intriguing statement, a question, or an interesting quote to "hook" the reader into wanting to find out more. If your first sentence isn't interesting, go back and rewrite it until it is.

Tip #8 Use Subheadings

Make the material in your article easy to read and understand by using plenty of subheadings to divide the material into manageable chunks of information. A good subheading lets the reader know what he's going to be reading about, so it pulls him into the next section of your article. If you include plenty of subheadings, you'll pull readers through your entire article, from start to finish.

Tip #9 Engage the Reader

Magazine articles that are the most interesting are those that tell a story or include anecdotes and other information that engage the reader. If you're writing fiction, avoid "telling" too much through straight narrative. Instead, "show" the reader what is happening in your story through plenty of action and dialogue. For nonfiction, use some of the same techniques fiction writers use. Paint pictures, tell stories, include quotes from experts.

Tip #10 Include a Sidebar or Two

Editors love sidebars. A sidebar is just a short article or story that accompanies your main article. A sidebar can be very short – just a few sentences or bulleted points – or several hundred words. Generally, a sidebar will give additional information or resources about the topic of your main article. Look through some of your favorite magazines and study the sidebars you find. These will give you some ideas for how to create sidebars for your own articles.

Checklist For Magazine Articles

Be sure you can check off each item on this list before you submit your article to the editor of the magazine you are targeting.

____ 1. The article is targeted to a specific market/magazine.

____ 2. The title of the article is "catchy" so it will attract the attention of readers.

____ 3. The subtitle (if used) lets readers know what to expect from the article.

____ 4. The article is clearly focused around the topic described in the title and subtitle.

____ 5. The article adheres to all the submissions guidelines of the targeted magazine(s).

____ 6. The article incorporates a variety of sources (including primary sources, if possible) and features effective use of anecdote, narration, quotation, humor, etc.

____ 7. The article is well structured and organized so it is engaging for readers. Each paragraph has a main idea, supporting details, and smooth transitions.

____ 8. The article "hooks" the reader right away with an engaging opening sentence and/or paragraph.

____ 9. The article includes descriptive subheadings that prepare the reader for what he is about to read and help "pull" him through the article.

____ 10 The article has an effective ending that restates the original premise or main idea presented in the introductory paragraph.

____ 11. The article includes an appropriate and interesting sidebar.

____ 12. The article has been proofed and any mistakes in spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. have been corrected.

Resources For Writing Magazine Articles

Helpful Articles Online

How Freelance Magazine Writing Works
A step by step tour that shows how to get published in magazines
http://money.howstuffworks.com/magazine-writing.htm

7 Steps to Writing for Magazines, for Money!
http://www.wahm.com/articles/7-Steps-to-Writing-for-Magazines-for-Money.html

Books & Marketing Information Online

Top 50 Literary Magazines
http://www.everywritersresource.com/topliterarymagazines.html

Mediabistro
Publishes various blogs and job listings for journalists
www.mediabistro.com

Wooden Horse Publishing
Current and new magazines with contacts, editorial calendars, demographics and writer's guidelines.
www.woodenhorsepub.com

Associations /Groups for Magazine Writers

American Society of Journalists and Authors
www.asja.org

American Society of Magazine Editors
http://www.magazine.org

6 Tips For Writing Sales Copy

Many companies pay freelance writers thousands of dollars to write the sales copy that will sell their products or services. These companies know there are definite skills involved in writing effective sales copy and they are willing to pay writers well for these skills.

It's a good idea to take a course in copywriting if you plan to write much sales copy. However, here are some tips that will help you create a good basic sales letter or a basic sales page for your website.

Tip #1 Think Like Your Customer/Reader

You want to appeal to people who have a need and/or desire for your product or service. Most people want something because it will either give them more pleasure or solve some problem so it lessens their pain or discomfort in some way.

Think like your customer/reader. Why should he want your product? What will it do for him? Keep your answers to these two questions in your mind as you are writing your sales copy.

Tip #2 Create an Attention Grabbing Headline

Whether you're writing a sales letter that will be sent out via regular mail or email, or you're creating an online sales page for a particular product or service, you'll need to create an attention grabbing headline. If you don't get readers' attention, they won't stick around to read your sales copy.

Tip #3 Use a Personal Tone

The best sales pages and sales letters appeal to the target market on a personal level. That is, the reader feels as if the writer is speaking to him personally. Good sales copy tends to relate a story in a tone that is "conversational" as though the writer were talking with the prospect one-to-one.

Tell your story (or your client's story if you're writing sales copy for a client), but appeal to the reader by writing from a 2nd person (you) point of view. For example, if you're trying to sell carpet cleaning services, you might write something like, "Are YOU embarrassed when friends come to visit because your carpet is stained and spotted?"

Tip #4 Stress Benefits, Not Features

When writing sales copy, the tendency is to focus on all the features of the product or service you're trying to sell. It's a much better idea to focus on the benefits this product or service will give the buyer. For example, if you're selling carpet cleaning services, focus on the main benefits customers enjoy when your company cleans their carpets. Use bulleted points for this. That way, if the reader simply scans your letter or sales page these benefits will stand out. Like this:

- Your family will breathe easier with clean carpets
- No more embarrassing stains, spots, or ground-in dirt in your carpets

- No more embarrassing odors from stained carpets
- Deep down clean you can't get on your own
- Personalized service – we evaluate your carpet and provide only what you need

Tip #5 Use "Magic" Words

Certain words have been proven to attract the attention of buyers like magic. Use these words in your sales copy. Among these "magic" words are the following:

Free
Quick and Easy
Secret
Money Back Guarantee

Tip #6 Tell Why Your Product or Service is Better Than Another Company's

Chances are, there are dozens of other companies offering the same types of products and services that you do. Your sales copy should convince prospective buyers that your products and services are the best choice among all the available options!

Include testimonials of previous satisfied customers or clients on your sales page or in your sales letter. Better yet, use these testimonials to create a story that explains how you came to work with one of these clients or customers and what you did that gave this customer satisfaction with your product or service.

Tip #7 Answer & Overcome Objections

Anticipate the reasons people reading your sales copy might give for not buying your product or service. Include information that answers and overcomes these objections. Most often, people use price as the reason they can't buy. They think they can't afford your product or service. If possible, take the emphasis off price. Include information that lets people know they won't just be spending money if they purchase from you (or your client, if you're writing sales copy for someone else), they'll be making a wise investment. If you have several payment options, stress that these options are "easily affordable."

Tip #8 Include a Call to Action

A call-to-action is one of the most important parts of any sales copy. Yet, surprisingly, many writers with little or no experience writing sales copy fail to include this in their sales letters or sales pages. They figure the reader KNOWS what you want him to do. This may be true, but he probably won't do what you want him to do unless you instruct him to do so. A call-to-action might be as simple as any of the following:

Click here now to order (on a sales page on a website)
Fill in this order form so we can get your product to you ASAP!
Call this number now to place your order!

Tip #9 Create a Sense of Urgency

Give readers a reason to order or purchase your product or service right now! Otherwise, even though they may be interested in buying, they will probably set your sales letter aside or merely bookmark your salespage, fully intending to purchase later. But most times, they don't make that purchase later. They forget about it.

To get readers to buy NOW, you need to offer an incentive that creates a sense of urgency. Words like "limited time offer" and "special price if you buy now" can help create that sense of urgency needed to nudge readers into taking action and buying what you have to offer.

Tip #10 Create a Swipe File

The best way to learn how to write effective sales copy is to study effective sales letters and sales pages. Look at the junkmail you receive each day. Much of this mail will probably be sales letters from a variety of companies. Read these sales letters. Keep the best ones as a swipe file and study them. Then, the next time you need to write a sales letter or sales page, use one or more of these letters as a template. You can do the same thing with online sales pages. Bookmark several salespages that you think are effective and use them as templates for your own salespages.



Checklist For Sales Copy

Check off each item on this list before you send out your sales letter or publish your sales page online.

____ 1. The sales copy contains a headline that should appeal to the target market.

____ 2. The headline of the sales letter or sales page includes the word 'You' – or at least implies it.

____ 3. The headline of the sales page or sales letter arouses curiosity.

____ 4. The sales letter or sales page contains magic sales words like 'secret' 'free' or 'quick and easy.'

____ 5. The sales letter or sales page focuses on the benefits of your company's products or services, so it addresses the fears, wants or needs of the buyer.

____ 6. The sales letter or sales page shows the reader how to relieve pain and achieve results with your product/ or service.

____ 7. Paragraphs in the sales copy are limited to 2–4 sentences each.

____ 8. The sales letter or sales page is free of typos, spelling mistakes, and other errors.

Resources For Writing Sales Copy

Helpful Articles Online

How to Write Killer Sales Copy: A Video Guide
Free Video Series on How to Write Sales Copy for the Web
http://www.seocopywriting.com/content-marketing/direct-reponse-copywriting/how-to-write-killer-sales-copy-a-video-guide/

How to Write the Perfect Sales Letter
http://www.writeexpress.com/sales-letter.html

Books

Title: ***How To: Write a Sales Letter That Works!***
Author: Sean Platt
Paperback: 110 pages
Publisher: Collective Inkwell (July 12, 2011)
ISBN-10: 0984338144
ISBN-13: 978-0984338146

Title: ***The Ultimate Sales Letter: Attract New Customers. Boost Your Sales.***
Author: Dan S. Kennedy
Paperback: 240 pages
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Associations/Groups for Copywriters

Copywriting.com
Free-to-use online forum that allows individuals in the copywriting profession to share tips, information and news. Includes a section for critiques so new copywriting can hone their skills before working with paying clients.
http://www.copywriting.com/community/forums.html

Small Business Ideas Forums
Free-to-use online copywriting forum to learn about the industry and also network with business owners in need of a copywriter.
http://www.smallbusinessbrief.com/forum/

7 Tips For Writing For Children – Fiction And Nonfiction

Many people are under the mistaken impression that writing for children is somehow easier than writing for adults. After all, children's stories and nonfiction articles for kids are written in short sentences and paragraphs, using easier vocabulary than the words found in stories and nonfiction for adults. What most people don't realize is that children's writing has very distinct genres, and within these genres are some very strict guidelines. Writers who don't bother to learn more about these genres and their guidelines find it very difficult to get their children's stories and articles published by traditional children's publishers.

Here are some general tips to follow when writing **fiction** for very young children.

Tip #1 Make Your Main Character a Child

Typically young children like to read stories that feature characters who are their own age or a bit older. For that reason, don't just include a child in your story for kids. Feature a child as the main character. Young readers will identify with the main character. They have trouble doing that if the main character is a teen or adult, so make sure the main character is a child.

Tip #2 Tell Your Story from a Single Point of View

Young children have trouble understanding stories that are told from several different viewpoints. Editors know this, so they generally look for stories that are told from a single point of view, the viewpoint of the main character.

It can be a bit tricky to maintain a single viewpoint. Read, read, read the types of stories for children that you wish to write. Notice how the authors of these stories were able to maintain the main character's point of view throughout the entire story. Use some of these same techniques in your own stories for very young children.

Tip #3 Give Your Main Character a Big Problem to Solve

Without conflict you don't have a story. You have what editors call "an incident", and editors don't buy incidents. They buy stories. Give your main character (a child) a big (age-appropriate) problem to solve, right at the start of the story.

Tip #4 Include Plenty of Rising Action

Once you give your main character a big problem to solve, you need to have that character struggle and struggle to solve it. Things should keep getting worse and worse. This will create plenty of rising action that will keep your readers interested in the story and they'll want to keep reading to find out what happens.

Tip #5 Use Rhythm & Repetition

Stories for young children are more engaging and enjoyable for kids and adults (who often read stories aloud to children) when those stories have a certain rhythm and make use of repetition. All stories don't need to rhyme, but they do need to have a pleasing rhythm. Read as many picture books and stories in children magazines as you can to get a feel for the various ways authors use rhythm and repetition to bring characters, settings, and storylines to life for young readers and pre-readers.

Tip #6 Show, Don't Tell

When writing for very young children it's important to make readers (and those listening to the story if they're too young to read so the story is read aloud to them) feel as if they are experiencing the story right along with the characters instead of simply reading about it. The best way to "show" the story instead of just "tell" it is by including plenty of action and dialogue and keeping straight narration to a minimum.

Read your story to see if many parts of it sound like a summary. If they do, that means you're "telling" too much and not "showing" enough.

Tip #7 Have Your Main Character Solve the Problem Himself

In real life, parents and other adults step in all the time to help children solve problems and resolve conflicts. In stories, however, the children themselves should solve the problems. In fact, the main character in a children's story should be a child, of course. And he should solve the problem himself without a parent or other well-meaning adult stepping in to save the day. Just be sure you give the main character a problem that is appropriate for his age and something that a child should be capable of solving or figuring out on his own.

Stories for children help empower young readers. When kids read about a child who solved his problem, this gives them the confidence to start solving their own problems as well.

Tip #8 End Your Story with a Twist

Editors love stories for young children that end with a twist. A twist is something the reader isn't expecting, yet is completely logical based on all the other events in the story.

Read dozens of picture books and make note of the way most of them end with a twist. Subconsciously, you'll be preparing yourself to create a fun twist for your own story for kids.

Checklist For Children's Fiction

Be sure you can check off each item on this list before you submit your children's story to an editor, agent, or publisher:

____ 1. The story is written from a single point of view and a child is the point of view character.

____ 2. The main (POV) character has a problem to solve right at the start of the story.

____ 3. The story has rising action, which means the problem keeps getting worse and worse for the main character, until something happens (the climax) that enables the main character to solve or resolve the problem.

____ 4. The main (POV) character solves or resolves the problem himself, without help from a parent or other well-meaning adult or another child, and the main (POV) character changes or grows somehow as a result of solving this problem. This is usually the "take away" point or theme of the story.

____ 5. Most of the story is "shown" through action and dialogue rather than "told" through straight narrative or inner monologue.

____ 6. The story ends with an unusual "twist" that is unexpected but completely logical.

____ 7. The story is free of spelling mistakes and grammatical and punctuation errors.

Writing Nonfiction For Children's Magazines

Children's magazines tend to buy and publish more nonfiction than fiction. That's one of the reasons it's easier to sell a nonfiction article to a children's magazine than it is a story. Yet there are definite "tricks of the trade" to know and follow when writing nonfiction for the children's magazine markets. The following tips should help you break into some of your favorite children's magazines.

Tip #1 Study the Markets & Read Back Issues

You'll have a much better chance of having your articles accepted if you study the magazines you wish to write for. You'll begin to get a feel for the types of things the magazines publish, you'll know what they've published lately (so you won't make the mistake of querying about a topic they've recently covered), and you'll also become familiar with the style and tone of each magazine. Editors want writers who are very familiar with their magazines, so the more you know about a magazine the better your chances of writing for it.

Tip #2 Study Publishers' Submission Guidelines

After you've studied the markets and read back issues of the magazines you wish to write for, find the submission guidelines for each of these publications. There are market guides specifically for children's magazines. You'll find these market guides at your local bookstore or online at booksellers like amazon.com. Most children's magazines have a website that features their submission guidelines and a themes list (if they have one). Take the time to read these guidelines carefully and follow them to the letter. Guidelines are actually a terrific "tool" for writers, so don't be intimidated by them.

Tip #3 Give Your Article a Narrow Focus & an Interesting Slant

Generally, nonfiction articles for children's magazines have a much narrower focus than articles for adult magazines. Many a children's writer has received a rejection letter for a nonfiction query with the words "too broad" scribbled across the top of it. To increase your chances of acceptance, give your nonfiction article a very narrow focus. If you want to write an article about dogs, for example, don't focus on all kinds of dogs, and include information that covers anything and everything about dogs. Instead, focus your article on one particular breed or type of dog. For example, you might write about service dogs or dogs with special needs.

Providing an interesting slant to your topic will help you narrow the focus of your article. For example, a popular children's magazine featured an article about light bulbs. The article had a unique slant – what is found inside a light bulb. This unique slant also helped narrow the focus of the topic since the author didn't try to tell anything and everything about light bulbs in his article, he just focused on what is found inside a light bulb.

Tip #4 Use a Variety of Sources

Adults know much more than children as a rule, simply because they've had more life experiences. As such, many adults think that all they need to do in a nonfiction article for children is provide information they know from their own education or life experience. But this isn't the case. Editors like to see information that comes from a variety of sources and isn't simply the writer's experience or opinion. Editors also like primary sources, so find people you can interview for your articles. Some of these people might be kids. Others might be people who do things that relate to kids or involve kids.

Tip #5 Make Your Article Easy to Read and Follow

Use simple sentences and simple, age-appropriate vocabulary in your nonfiction articles for kids. Also, include plenty of subheadings in your articles and keep your paragraphs short. Subheadings will help children realize what they're going to be reading about in each section of your article, so they will "pull" readers through the article. Just be sure each section and each paragraph of your article follows the next in a logical manner.

Tip #6 End Your Article with an Interesting & Logical Conclusion

Sum up the main points of your article in an interesting way in the final paragraph. That way, children will be left with a clearer understanding of what they've read in the article and they'll be more likely to remember what they've read.

Checklist For Children's Nonfiction Articles

Be sure you can check off each item on this list before you submit your nonfiction article to your targeted children's magazine.

____ 1. The article has a narrow focus. It doesn't try to tell anything and everything about the subject. Instead, it focuses on just one aspect of this subject.

____ 2. The article is more than the author's opinion. There are some facts and research cited to back up the information presented.

____ 3. The topic is covered in a fun and engaging way for children. It does NOT read like an encyclopedia entry.

____ 4. The article "looks" like a work of nonfiction since it contains subtopic headings, sidebars, etc. to engage the reader and make the information easy to understand.

____ 5. There is an engaging "hook" to the article that pulls in the reader at the very beginning.

____ 6. The material is well-suited for the targeted magazine.

____ 7. The article has a logical and interesting conclusion.

____ 8. The article has been proofed and any mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. have been corrected.

Resources For Writing For Children

Helpful Articles Online

Writing Your Story – Tips on How to Write Children's Stories
http://www.aaronshep.com/kidwriter/Tips.html

How to Write a Picture Book
http://www.wow-womenonwriting.com/27-FE2-HowToWritePictureBook.html

Books and Newsletters for Children's Writers

Title: ***Yes! You Can Learn How to Write Children's Books, Get Them Published, and Build a Successful Writing Career***
Author: Nancy I. Sanders
Paperback: 368 pages
Publisher: E&E Publishing (June 5, 2009)
ISBN-10: 0979160669
ISBN-13: 978-0979160660

Title: ***A Treasure Trove of Opportunity: How to Write and Sell Articles for Children's Magazines***
Author: Melissa Abramovitz
Paperback: 280 pages
Publisher: E&E Publishing (February 21, 2012)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0983149917
ISBN-13: 978-0983149910

Children's Book Insider (Newsletter for Children's Writers)
http://write4kids.com/aboutcbi.html

Children's Writer (Newsletter for Children's Writers)
http://www.childrenswriter.com/

Associations/Groups for Children's Writers

The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI)
Professional organization dedicated to serving the people who write, illustrate, or share a vital interest in children's literature
http://www.scwi.org

Institute of Children's Literature
Offers a variety of correspondence courses in writing for children and teens.
http://www.institutechildrenslit.com/

8 Tips For Writing Basic Business Materials – Memos, Business Reports, & Emails

If you work for a company or do business with companies and other professionals, chances are you'll need to write a report, a memo, or an important email at some point in your career.

A memo is a short message to a person(s) within an organization. Memos are generally used to ask for information, announce something, or provide an update. Try these tips for writing effective memos:

Tip #1 State the Main Idea or Problem Upfront

Memos are short, so you don't have time to beat around the bush. State the main point or problem (reason for the memo) in the first sentence or at least the first paragraph.

Tip #2 Give the Solution or Desired Outcome

Once you've stated the main idea or problem upfront, smoothly transition to the solution or outcome you desire from the reader.

Tip #3 Be Firm But Polite

Many times a memo will be used to announce some change employees need to know about, and this might be a change they will not welcome but must accept. In cases like this, it's particularly important that you make sure your message comes across as firm but still polite.

Checklist For Memos

Be sure you can check off each item on this list before you send out your memo.

____ 1. The main point or problem is stated clearly in the first sentence or two of the memo.

____ 2. The memo includes a call to action or desired outcome from readers.

____ 3. The tone (and language) of the memo is firm but polite.

____ 4. The memo is short – just a few paragraphs.

____ 5. The memo has been proofed and any mistakes have been corrected.

Business Reports

When you need to put together information to help members of your company or another business make a decision, you'll create a business report. A business report might also be used to present the solution to a problem or provide information about past practices to help a business make plans for the future. Check the resource page of this section if you need to know how to put together a business plan, then follow these tips to get started:

Tip #1 Define Your Purpose

When you take time to define and clarify the purpose of your report, you'll know what information you'll need to gather for it. You'll also know if there are key people who can give you this information or whether you'll need to conduct a research project to get it.

Tip #2 Organize Your Information

Once you've determined the purpose of your report and collected your information, create a method for organizing that information. If you have volumes of data, it can be difficult to effectively analyze it if it isn't well organized.

Tip #3 Know Your Readers

When you have a clear understanding of who you are writing for you'll be able to determine how best to address these readers. You'll know the correct tone, attitude, and emphasis you should take in your report.

Tip #4 Motivate Your Readers to Read the Report

Make your report easy to read. Use powerful language and clear, concise sentences and short paragraphs. Some people may choose to only scan the report, so use bulleted points, interesting headlines and subheadings. Use other graphics such as tables, pie charts, bar graphs, maps, photographs, flow charts, etc. to effectively convey key information. This should ensure you have plenty of white space on each page.

Tip #5 Proof, Revise, and Distribute the Report

If possible, have someone else proofread your report. They'll be more likely to catch any mistakes or items that are unclear. Revise the report, making any necessary corrections, then distribute the report, including all necessary attachments and documents. Also, be sure that every person who should get the report gets it.

Checklist For Business Reports

Be sure you can check off each item on this list before distributing a business report.

____ 1. The purpose of the report is clearly defined.

____ 2. Data and other facts presented in the report are accurate and complete.

____ 3. The report presents a clear objective view of the problem or situation.

____ 4. Graphics (such as tables, pie charts, maps, flow charts, bar graphs, etc.) are used effectively in the report to convey key information.

____ 5. The report presents possible solutions to the problem.

____ 6. The report has been proofed and any mistakes and final revisions have been made.

Writing Business Emails

Email makes it much easier and faster for people in the business world to communicate. Yet no one wants to read lengthy emails that ramble on and on about something, or emails that seem to go back-and-forth needlessly. Here are some general tips for writing business emails:

Tip #1 Streamline

In his book, *The 4-Hour WorkWeek*, author Timothy Ferriss points out how important it is to streamline emails to avoid needless back-and-forth communications. He suggests using an "if…then" structure to business emails that require a response. "Thus an email with 'Can you meet at 4:00 p.m.?' would become 'Can you meet at 4:00 p.m.? If so…If not, please advise three other times that work for you.'"

Tip #2 Make Sure the Topic in Your Subject Line is Easily Understood

If the subject line of your email is easily understood by the person(s) you are sending it to, it's more likely the email will be opened and read. Be sure you create a subject line that clearly lets the reader know why this email contains information he will find important and be interested in reading.

Tip #3 Get Right to the Point

State your purpose or main point in the first sentence of your email. Readers shouldn't have to read several paragraphs just to get to the important parts of your message.

Tip #4 Avoid ALL CAPITALS and Textspeak

When you type using ALL CAPITALS, it's considered shouting, so this is to be avoided. Also avoid using all lower-case letters (as in mary smith). Your emails should look as professional as any other type of business writing. For that reason, also avoid common abbreviations and acronyms such as ROFL (rolling on the floor laughing). This comes across as unprofessional and your reader may not understand what you mean anyway.

Tip #5 Be Brief and Polite

If possible, keep your message to just two or three short paragraphs, and always be polite.

Tip #6 Edit and Proofread Before Sending

Check your message, subject line, etc. one last time before sending.

Checklist For Business Emails

Be sure you can check off each on this list before sending a business email.

____ 1. The subject line of the email is clear and is something that should interest the reader enough that he'll want to open the email.

____ 2. The email is written using an "if…then" component (if appropriate).

____ 3. The main point is stated clearly in the beginning of the email.

____ 4. Formatting for the email is correct for business – no textspeak, etc.

____ 5. The email is brief and the tone and language are polite.

____ 6. The email has been proofed and any mistakes have been corrected.

Resources For Writing Basic Business Materials

Helpful Online Articles

How to Write a Formal Business Report
http://www.ehow.com/how_5525431_write-formal-business-report.html

How to Write an Effective Memo
http://www.elistonwordpro.ca/id19.html

Books

Title: *Email Etiquette: Netiquette for the Information Age* (Kindle e-book)
Author: David Tuffley
File Size: 89 KB
Print Length: 31 pages
Sold by: Amazon Digital Services, Inc.
ASIN: B0057CTXGS

Title: *The Elements of Business Writing: A Guide to Writing Clear, Concise Letters, Memos, Reports, Proposals, and Other Business Documents*
Authors: Gary Blake, Bob W. Bly
Paperback: 140 pages
Publisher: Longman; First edition (August 1, 1992)
ISBN-10: 0020080956
ISBN-13: 978-0020080954

Associations/Groups for Business Writers

International Association of Business Communicators

http://www.iabc.com/

Association for Business Communication

http://businesscommunication.org/

9 Tips For Writing Resumes

At some point in your career you'll need a professional resume. If you hope to find a new job or a better job, a resume is a must-have if you want to land an interview. You should also have an updated resume at all times because you just never know when a great career opportunity will come your way and you don't want to have to scramble to put together your resume.

Try these tips for writing a professional resume:

Tip #1 Gather Your Information Ahead of Time

The toughest part of writing a resume is gathering all the information for it. If you do this ahead of time, when you're ready to sit down and write the resume you can just use a template to fill in most of your information.

Make a list of your past employers, dates you were employed, positions you held with these companies, etc. Make a list of colleges, universities, and trade schools you've attended, the dates you attended, degrees earned, and major areas of study. Next, list all the work you have done (both paid work and volunteer) that relates to the job (or type of job) you wish to find. Next, list your job skills and qualifications.

Gathering all this information will also help determine the best resume style for you – a style that makes the most of your education, skills, and work background.

Tip #2 Choose the Best Format or Style for Your Resume

There are several different formats or resume styles to choose from. The most popular is the chronological resume. However, if you have little or no previous experience, this style will not be the best style choice for you. Evaluate which resume style or format would put your particular experiences, education, and background in the best light.

Tip #3 Use a Template

Once you've decided the best style or format to use for your resume, find a template for that particular style. That way, since you've already gathered your basic information (tip #1), now you can start writing your resume by filling in the template with that information. Getting started is the toughest part of writing a resume. Once you get started, it won't be difficult to finish writing the resume.

Tip #4 Avoid Using "I"

Since a resume is all about you (or the person you're writing the resume for), there's no need to use the pronoun "I", as in "I created lesson plans, taught classes, and graded papers." You don't need to worry about using complete sentences either. Resumes are meant to be short and to-the-point. Use phrases like this: "Created lesson plans, taught classes, graded papers."

Tip #5 Use Plain, Simple English

You'll want to use plain, simple English in your resume. However, use words that give the reader a clear understanding of what you have accomplished in the past. Study sample resumes you can find online for the verbs and phrasing used to make an applicant's background and qualifications really stand out. Use these types of verbs and phrases in your resume.

Tip #6 Use Bulleted Statements/Points

Your resume should include plenty of white space, so it's easy for prospective employers to read and tell at a glance if you have the background and experience they are looking for. Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Use bulleted points to emphasize key information. Just be sure the structure is parallel when using bulleted points.

Tip #8 Proof Your Resume One Last Time

Revise and then proof your resume one last time, making any necessary corrections or changes before sending it out to prospective employers. Even with the best education, experience, and other job skills, you won't impress anyone if your resume includes typos or punctuation and grammatical mistakes.

Checklist For Resumes

Check off each item on this list before submitting your resume for review.

____ 1. The resume includes all relevant contact information.

____ 2. The resume is attractive and easy to read.

____ 3. Key skills, training, and experience are highlighted.

____ 4. The resume is free of spelling mistakes, general typos, and punctuation and grammatical errors.

Resources For Writing Resumes

Helpful Articles Online

How to Write a Masterpiece of a Resume
http://www.rockportinstitute.com/resumes

Resume Writing, Resume Samples, Resume Builders
http://jobsearch.about.com/od/resumes/Resumes.htm

How to Choose the Best Resume Format
http://jobsearch.about.com/od/resumewriting/qt/resumeformat.htm

Books

Title: ***How to Write a Resume (Kindle e-book)***
Author: Thomas Tucker
File Size: 568 KB
Print Length: 98 pages
Sold by: Amazon Digital Services, Inc.
ASIN: B0096YIJLI

Title: ***Resumes for Dummies***
Author: Joyce Lain Kennedy
Paperback: 384 pages
Publisher: For Dummies; 6 edition (February 8, 2011)
ISBN-10: 0470873612
ISBN-13: 978-0470873618

Associations/Groups for Resume Writers

Professional Association of Resume Writers & Career Coaches
www.parw.com

The National Resume Writers' Association
The NRWA.com

10 Tips For Writing Personal Essays

Most people who love to write hope to sell a personal essay to a major magazine one day. In a personal essay (as opposed to a professional essay), the writer doesn't need to prove a point to the reader and back it up with research. Instead, he can give his opinion about a topic of particular interest to him or he can show how a personal experience changed him in some way because he learned a lesson from it. Here are some tips for writing a personal essay:

Tip #1 Choose One Event As Your Focus

A personal essay should have a narrow focus. Choose just one event or aspect of your life to use as the focus of your essay. Choose an experience or event that changed you in some way or taught you a meaningful lesson.

Ti p #2 Borrow Fiction Techniques

Personal essays are considered creative nonfiction. As such, they rely on many of the same techniques as fiction including dialogue, characterization, conflict, plot, and setting. Use these techniques to bring your personal experience to life for the reader.

Tip #3 Write "Tight"

Make every word count. Use strong, descriptive nouns and verbs and direct sentences. Bring the essay to life with precise sensory details, too.

Tip #4 Be Honest

The most effective personal essays connect with readers on an emotional level. Be honest with readers as you relate your feelings toward the event or experience that is the focus of your essay.

Tip #5 Use 1st Person POV

You want readers to see things from your viewpoint, so write your essay from a 1st person point-of-view (POV) and it will be more personal and you'll have an immediate connection with the reader.

Tip #6 Keep the Structure Simple

Use the same structure you would for any good nonfiction article, so your essay will be easy for readers to follow. Start with an introduction, expand on your major point in the body of your essay, and end with a conclusion that summarizes what you learned or how this life experience changed you.

Tip #7 Revise and Proof Before Submitting

It's a good idea to have someone else read your first draft. A critique group is perfect for this. Having a group of other writers read and make suggestions about your manuscript can help you see if you need to tighten up the writing, create smoother transitions, etc. It's also a good idea to have someone else proofread your final version so you can make any corrections in the manuscript before submitting it to a publisher.

Checklist For Personal Essays

Check off each item on this list before submitting your personal essay for publication.

____ 1. The essay focuses on just one main event or life experience.

____ 2. The essay conveys the intended tone.

____ 3. All unnecessary words and phrases have been eliminated so the writing is "tight."

____ 4. The essay engages the reader through emotions and showing not telling.

____ 5. The essay is told from a 1st person point of view (POV) and maintains this point of view.

____ 6. The essay is written with an introduction, a body, and a satisfying conclusion.

____ 7. The essay has been proofed for mistakes and all mistakes have been corrected.

Resources For Writing Essays

Helpful Articles Online

Tips for Writing a Personal Essay
http://www.poynter.org/uncategorized/2067/tips-for-writing-a-personal-essay/

The Art of the Personal Essay
http://www.writing-information-and-tips.com/the-art-of-personal-essay-writing.html

Books

Title: ***How to Write a Basic Essay in Seven Easy Steps: A Beginner's Guide***
Author: Katrina Parker Williams
File Size: 124 KB
Print Length: 38 pages
Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited
Publisher: StepArt Designs (May 20, 2012)
Sold by: Amazon Digital Services, Inc.
ASIN: B0084WCPQ8

Title: ***How to Write Essays: A Step-By-Step Guide for All Levels, with Sample Essays***
Author: Don Shiach
Paperback: 163 pages
Publisher: How to Books; 2nd edition (August 15, 2009)
ISBN-10: 1845283414
ISBN-13: 978-1845283414

Associations/Groups for Essay Writers

Essay Writers
http://jetprogram.me/groups/article-writers/

Essay Writers Guild
http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Essay-Writers-Guild-4517973

Editorial and Essay Writers
http://www.writerscafe.org/groups/Editorial-And-Essay-Writers/397/

11 Tips for Writing Letters of Complaint and Cover Letters

If you've received poor service from a company or purchased a product that turned out to be inferior or faulty, don't just live with the problem. Write the company a letter of complaint. Just don't get angry in the letter. Simply explain the problem, give a solution you would like to see the company provide, and send your letter to the appropriate person at the company.

Here are some tips for writing an effective letter of complaint:

Tip #1 Identify the Problem

You want your letter to do more than simply say you were unhappy with this particular company. You need to be specific. Before you sit down to write the letter itself, try to write a sentence or two that explains the problem in as much detail as you can. How did the company failed to live up to its promise? Were you sold a faulty product? Was customer service poor in some way (spell it out specifically)? Your letter will be more effective if you have taken the time to clearly identify the problem instead of merely writing to say you are very unhappy with the company.

Tip #2 Recall the Details

Try to recall all the details that took place when you purchased this product or received this service. Write down all these details. Give the name of the faulty product, the store name and number and department where you bought it, the date and time this transaction or event took place. Give the name of the employee involved, if possible. Look back at the receipt if you purchased a product. It probably includes much of this information if you can't recall it on your own.

Tip #3 Be Reasonable

Keep the tone of your letter positive and professional. You don't want to appear unreasonable, and generally, companies want to know when a good customer experiences a problem with their product or service so they can remedy it and keep that customer happy.

Tip #4 Identify the Solution

Figure out what you expect the company to do about this problem. Do you want them to replace a faulty product, give you a refund, or assure you they will take disciplinary action against a rude employee? You'll need to state this in your letter, so decide what you expect before you sit down to put the letter together.

Tip #5 Turn All This Information into a Cordial Letter

Once you've listed all the information you need, turn this information into a cordial letter of complaint. State your reason for writing (the problem) including all the details of when and where this event or transaction took place. Follow this with the solution to the problem – what you want the company to do to remedy this situation. If you've had good service or purchased quality products from this company before, include that information in your letter to show that you are a valuable customer and are sure the company would want to know about and remedy your recent problem.

Finally, once your letter is written, be sure it gets to a person with power within the company. You want the letter to be read by someone who has the authority to remedy the problem in the way you've asked for.

Checklist For Letters Of Complaint

Check off each item on this list before sending off your letter of complaint:

____ 1. The problem is stated clearly in the first paragraph of the letter.

____ 2. All the details about this problem are included the first few paragraphs of the letter (when and where it took place, who was involved, etc.).

____ 3. The desired or expected solution to this problem is stated in this letter.

____ 4. The letter is directed toward the correct person(s) within the company who have the power to provide the desired solution.

Writing Cover Letters

If you're hoping to get a job interview with a specific company, you can increase your odds of that happening with a well-written cover letter. Here are some tips for writing an effective cover letter to send to prospective employers, along with your resume:

Tip #1 Customize Your Letter

If you're answering a job ad, the employer may ask for just a resume. But include a cover letter and your resume will be more likely to get noticed. In your letter, briefly explain how your skills match up with what the employer is looking for as indicated in his job posting (the ad you're responding to). Customize your cover letter like this for each specific job (and company) you apply for.

Tip #2 Include Highlights of Your Resume

Since you'll be including your resume with your cover letter, there's no need to duplicate the resume. However, in your letter you should point out a few key points from your resume, so the employer will be sure to notice them. Highlight your education and/or experience as it relates to the job.

Tip #3 Keep It Brief & to the Point

Your cover letter should be one page or less with short paragraphs, so get right to the point. Write simply, clearly, and directly.

Tip #4 Personalize the Letter

Address the letter to the person responsible for hiring. You may need to make a phone call to get this person's name, but it will be well worth it.

Tip #5 Consider an Email Cover Letter

Most companies will indicate whether or not they accept cover letters and resumes via email. Use email only when indicated and send an attachment to the email only if the employer requests one. Otherwise, include everything within the email itself.

Tip #6 Proof Everything Before Sending

If possible, ask someone to read your cover letter (and your resume, for that matter) before you send it. At the very least, spell check and proofread the material yourself and make any needed corrections before sending it.

Checklist For Cover Letters

Be sure you can check off each item on this list before sending out your cover letter.

____ 1. The cover letter is customized for the company it is being sent to.

____ 2. The cover letter highlights the resume and points out key qualifications that match up with what the employer is looking for in a candidate.

____ 3. The cover letter is brief and gets right to the point.

____ 4. The cover letter is personalized – addressed to the person who will hire the person to fill the advertised position.

____ 5. If the cover letter is to be sent via email, there are no attachments (unless requested by the employer). Everything is contained within the email itself.

____ 6. The cover letter has been proofed and any needed revisions and corrections have been made.

Resources For Writing Business Letters

Helpful Articles Online

Writing the Basic Business Letter
Purdue Online Writing Lab
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/

Writing a Business Letter
Hunter College Reading/Writing Center – Business and Professional Writing
http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/reading-writing/on-line/b-letter.html

Books

Title: ***How to Write It, Third Edition: A Complete Guide to Everything You'll Ever Write***
Author: Sandra E. Lamb
Paperback: 432 pages
Publisher: Ten Speed Press; 3 edition (August 30, 2011)
ISBN-10: 160774032X
ISBN-13: 978-1607740322

Title: ***Writing at Work – A Quick and Easy Guide to Grammar and Effective Business Writing***
Author: Ellis Morgan
Paperback: 134 pages
Publisher: Guidemark Publishing Limited (September 5, 2011)
ISBN-10: 0956946623
ISBN-13: 978-0956946621

Associations/Groups for Business Writers

International Association of Business Communicators
www.iabc.com

Professional Writers Association
www.prowriters.org

Society of American Business Editors and Writers
www.sabew.org

12 Final Self-Editing Checklist – Basic Checklist for Any Type of Writing

If you go back to the beginning of this e-book and reread the basic writing tips, you'll see that those tips have been turned into this overall checklist to use for any type of writing.

Check off each item on this list before you publish anything yourself or submit it elsewhere for publication.

____ 1. The work is appropriate for the intended audience (readers).

____ 2. The purpose of the material is well-defined or implied.

____ 3. The material has been well-planned and is well-organized.

____ 4. The material is easy to read and easy to understand (short paragraphs, many subheadings and bulleted points or numbered steps included).

____ 5. Vocabulary used in the material is appropriate for the intended audience (a minimum of jargon).

____ 6. Material is written using active, precise verbs and nouns.

____ 7. Material has been revised and edited to eliminate unnecessary words.

____ 8. Material has been proofed so it is free of spelling mistakes, typos, punctuation and grammatical errors, etc.